

# Notes From The Field: *NE*

## Pre-Season Report 8/29/18

**UPDATE:** Since biologist have turned in some information we have received significant rain across the state between 8/27/18 - 8/29/18. Please be sure to check your areas out before hunting them in the early season as some places may no longer be accessible anymore.

*Was this helpful? Let us know by taking this [3 question survey](#).*

### ***Vilas/Oneida***

Regarding duck broods, we have observed similar numbers in previous years for mallards, wood ducks and blue-winged teal. Canada goose broods however seemed to be less than in previous year in our area, likely do to the late snow we received in April. For total number of birds, we expect similar numbers to previous years in our area. Our area has experienced less rain than normal, so water levels are lower than normal than a typical year. Aquatic food availability is normal with wild rice and smartweed being our top wetland foods on the landscape. Crop harvest in the area seems ahead in corn and timing seems to be similar to previous years for soybeans, wheat and alfalfa/hay.

#### ***Current summer big projects:***

- 1) None

#### ***Drawdowns that might affect hunters:***

None, but water levels are lower overall than last year with the drier summer weather.

### ***Marathon/Wood/Portage***

Regarding duck broods, we have observed similar numbers in previous years for mallards and wood ducks. Blue-winged teal and other ducks seemed to have had good production this year as we observed more broods this year compared to prior years. Canada Goose broods however seemed fewer than in previous year in our area, likely do to the late snow we received in April. For total number of birds, we expect similar numbers to previous years in our area. Our area has experienced drought like conditions and has only received about 3.5 inches of rain in June, July, August so water levels are lower than normal. Aquatic food availability is normal with smartweed, bidens, and wild rice being our top wetland foods on the landscape. Crop harvest in the area seems ahead in corn and soybeans, while wheat and alfalfa/hay are timing up to be similar to previous years. .

#### ***Current summer big projects:***

- 1) Currently working to install 2 new water control structures on North Honey Island (Mead WA).
- 2) Dike renovation on Smokey Hill river dike (Mead WA).
- 3) Dike renovation on West Honey Island (Mead WA).
- 4) Aerial brush spraying on Smokey Hill, Berkhahn, Pool 6 (McMillan WA).
- 5) Cattail spraying on North Honey Island, North Smokey Hill (Mead WA).
- 6) Will be conducting a prescribed burn on North Honey Island (Cattail) this fall (Mead WA).

***Drawdowns that might affect hunters:***

Full Drawdowns: North Smokey Hill, Smokey Hill, North Honey Island, Dragonfly Pond, Little Birch

Partial Draws: Rangeline (due to dike issues) Honey Island: Plan to pump for waterfowl season

## **Shawano/Oconto**

Regarding duck broods, we have observed similar numbers in previous years for mallards, wood ducks and blue-winged teal. Canada Goose broods however seemed to be less than in previous year in our area, likely do to the late snow we received in April. For total number of birds, we expect similar numbers to previous years in our area. Our area has experienced normal rainfall this year, so water levels are similar to previous years. However, as of August 27<sup>th</sup>, 4 inches of rain on some of our summer work drawdowns has improved water conditions for the waterfowl season. Aquatic food availability is similar to past years with wild rice and bur reed being our top wetland foods on the landscape. Great rice in Outagamie County on Wilderness unit flowages, as well as Goose flowage on Herb Behnke unit. Crop harvest in the area seems ahead in corn, soybeans, and wheat while alfalfa/hay is timing up to be similar to previous years.

***Current summer big projects:***

- 1) Construction on McDonald flowage
- 2) Construction on Wilbur Flowage
- 3) Wolf river construction

***Drawdowns that might affect hunters:***

McDonald flowage in drawdowns  
Wilbur flowage in drawdowns  
Wolf River in drawdowns

## **Outagamie**

Regarding duck broods, we have observed similar numbers compared to previous years for mallards and blue-winged teal. Wood ducks and Canada goose broods however seemed to be fewer than in previous year in our area, likely do to the late snow we received in April. For total number of birds, we expect similar numbers to previous years in our area. Our area has experienced normal rain fall this summer, so water levels are similar to typical years. Aquatic food availability is normal in our area. Crop harvest in the area seems behind in corn and soybeans and similar to previous years in wheat and alfalfa/hay.

***Current summer big projects:***

- 1) No big projects. Only routine maintenance to dike systems.

***Drawdowns that might affect hunters:***

Eagle flowage on Herb Behnke is still drawn down for a water control structure replacement.

Outagamie W.A. flowage was drawn down for major dike work, but we put boards back in to try and raise water levels.

## **Green Bay/Brown/ Kewanee/Door**

In terms of duck broods, we have observed similar numbers in previous years for mallards, wood ducks, other ducks. Blue-winged teal seemed to have good production this year as we saw more broods this year

compared to prior years. Canada Goose broods also seemed to be similar to previous year in our area. For total number of birds, we expect similar numbers to previous years in our area. Water levels are higher than normal. Aquatic food availability is normal with mixed submergent foods, water celery, and smartweed species being our top wetland foods on the landscape. Crop harvest in the area seems ahead in corn while soybeans, wheat and alfalfa/hay are similar to previous years. Green Bay has pockets of great coastal marsh habitat for early season hunting, but late season diver hunting becomes very popular as Green Bay attracts tens of thousands of waterfowl to feed in the deeper waters. Lower Green Bay has the best potential for hunting dabbling ducks and all of Green Bay will have great diver duck hunting in late October through the end of the duck season. Blue-winged teal numbers are impressive this year in lower Green Bay.

***Current summer big projects:***

1) Lake Michigan water levels continue to remain up compared to 2013. This cycle of higher water levels continues to change the coastal wetlands into much more diverse hemi marsh habitats with less large emergent marsh stands. This hemi-marsh habitat has been beneficial to waterfowl.

***Drawdowns that might affect hunters:***

With elevated water levels in Lake Michigan, reduction in cattail cover is evident and historic hunting locations may be more difficult to hunt in as the vegetation has significantly changed in the past 3-5 years.

## **Statewide**

Wisconsin statewide outlook for this season looks similar to previous years. Brood counts seem average for mallards, blue-winged teal, wood ducks and other ducks. Canada Goose numbers however seem to have been affected statewide due to the late snowfall we received in April that may have affected our nesting geese. Late snowstorms in April set nesting back and caused a lot of first attempt failures across the state. Water levels across the state are variable with many places being near normal, with exceptions in southern and central Wisconsin. Southern Wisconsin has seen almost daily rainfall starting mid-August making water levels considerably higher than normal. Central Wisconsin on the other hand has been very dry with wildlife staff reporting almost drought like conditions. Wetland food across the state seems to be similar to previous years and crop harvest also seems to be similar in most areas with corn being slightly ahead of a normal year.

To be successful we encourage all of you to get out and scout before your hunting trips. Waterfowl hunters in Wisconsin have shown that hunters who scout 3 times before hunting shoot three times as many birds. It will be important also to check your spots out before hunting as some spots may not be huntable due to high water.

Be safe and happy hunting!

### **5 Important things to know:**

1. North duck zone will open one week later than in previous years, resulting in a single statewide opener for the North, South and Mississippi zones on Sept. 29;
2. Elimination of the Horicon Canada goose Management Zone (resulting in a single statewide regular goose zone);

3. Increase in the daily Canada goose bag limit to three birds per day and there is a second split in the Southern Canada goose zone resulting in a goose season that is open during the Christmas and New Year's holidays; and
4. Canada goose hunters, registration of Canada geese and in-field validation of the Canada goose hunting permit is no longer required.
5. Check out [The Basics of Waterfowl Hunting in Wisconsin](#) document on the [Waterfowl Hunting](#) webpage along with other useful tools in our Hunter resources tab for a few tips and tricks!

If you have any questions, please contact Trenton Rohrer WDNR Assistant Migratory Game Bird Ecologist send him an email or call.

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